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A FAMOUS FRAUD

Simonides, the Forger of Ancient Writings.

Successfully Duped Many Libraries—Discovered at Royal Berlin Academy.

In the October number of Cosmopolis, Prof. Max Muller tells in a most interesting way, of some of the frauds of Simonides, the famous forger of Greek manuscripts. At one time or another many of the great libraries of Continental Europe have been duped by this clever man who manufactured "ancient writings" so successfully that even experts were often unable to detect flaws in them.

When Simonides put in his appearance at Oxford, Rev. Rev. H. O. Coxe, librarian of the Bodleian Library, had already been warned of the character of his "treasures." Professor Muller tells of his failure at Oxford as follows:

"Simonides—so called, not because he was a descendant of the poet Simonides but (with a long i) because his ancestor was one Simon, a Jew—addressed the librarian half in ancient Greek, half in modern English. He knew both equally well. His manners were most engaging. The librarian was equally polite, and began to examine some of the Greek MSS. 'These are of small value,' Simonides said, 'they are modern. What century would you assign to them?' The librarian assigned the thirteenth century to them, and Simonides fully agreed. He then went on producing MS. after MS., but claiming for none of them more than the tenth or ninth century. All went on most amicably, until he produced some fragments of an uncial Greek MS. The librarian opened his eyes wide, and, examining them very carefully, put some of them aside for further consideration. Becoming more and more confident, Simonides at last produced a real treasure. 'This,' he said, 'ought to repose nowhere but in the Bodleian Library. And what century would you assign to it, Mr. Librarian?' Simonides said with a smile and a respectful bow. Mr. Coxe turned over a few pages, and, looking very grave, too never quite without his usual twinkle, 'The second half of the nineteenth century, sir,' he said, 'and now pack up your MSS, and Apage (Begone).'

"Simonides did as he was told, and, with an injured expression, walked away. Next day he wrote a Greek letter to the librarian, bitterly complaining about the Apage, and offering some more MSS. for his inspection. But all was in vain; too much had been discovered about him in the meantime.

"He was certainly a most extraordinary man—a scholar who, if he had applied his ingenuity to editing instead of forging Greek MSS., might have held a very high position. His greatest achievement was, of course, the newly discovered Greek text of the history of ancient Egypt by Uranios. The man possessed a large quantity of later Greek MSS. It seems that in the Eastern monasteries, where he sold, he also acquired some Greek MSS., by what means we must not ask. He tried several of these MSS. with chemicals to see whether, as was the fashion during the Middle Ages, the parchment on which they were written had been used before, and the old writing scraped off in order to get writing material for some legends of Christian saints or other modern compositions. When that has been the case, chemical appliances bring out the old writing very clearly, and he knew that in this way some very old and valuable Greek texts had been recovered. In that case the old writing comes out generally in a dark blue, and becomes quite legible as underlying the modern Greek text. As Simonides was not lucky enough to discover or recover an ancient Greek text, or what is called a palimpsest MS., the thought struck him that he might manufacture such a treasure, which would have sold at a very high price. But even this did not satisfy his ambition. He might have taken the text of the Gospels and written it between the lines of one of his modern Greek MSS., adding some startling readings. In that case detection would have seemed much more difficult. But he soared higher. He knew that a man of the name of Uranios had written a history of Egypt, which was lost. Simonides made up his mind to write himself in ancient Greek a history of Egypt such as he thought Uranios might have written. And, deep and clever as he was, he chose Bunsen's 'Egypt' and Lepsius's 'Chronology' as the authorities which he faithfully followed. After he had finished his Greek text, he wrote it in dark blue ink and in ancient uncial Greek letters between the letters of a Greek MS. of about 1200 A. D. Anybody who knows the smallness of the letters in such a MS. can appreciate the enormous labor it must have been to insert, as it were, beneath and between these minute lines of each letter the supposed earlier writings of Uran-

ios, so that the blue ink should never encroach on the small but true Greek letters. One single mistake would have been fatal, and such is the knowledge which antiquaries now possess of the exact changes of Greek letters in every century that here, too, one single mistake in the outline of the old uncial letters would have betrayed the forger.

"When Simonides had finished his masterpiece, he boldly offered it to the highest tribunal, the Royal Berlin Academy. The best chemists of the time examined it microscopically, and could find no flaw. Lepsius, the great Egyptologist, went through the whole text, and declared that the book could not be a forgery, because no one except Uranios could have known the names of the ancient Egyptian kings and the right dates of the various dynasties, which were exactly such as he had settled them in his books. The thought that Simonides might have consulted these very books never entered anybody's mind. Great was the excitement in the camp of the Egyptologists, and, the price demanded by Simonides was shamefully extravagant, Bunsen persuaded the then King of Prussia, Frederick William IV., to pay it and to secure the treasure for Berlin. Dindorf, the famous Greek scholar, had been entrusted by Simonides with the editing of the text, and he had chosen the Clarendon Press at Oxford to publish the first specimen of it. In the mean time unfavorable reports of Simonides reached the German newspapers, and during a new examination of the MS. some irregularities were discovered by a very strong microscope where the blue ink had run across the letters of the modern Greek text. No doubt could then remain that the whole MS. was a forgery."

FAMOUS KHYBER PASS.

Northwestern Gateway to British India.

Khyber Pass, says the London Daily News, the northwestern gateway of British India, and one of the four chief passes which unite our possessions with Afghanistan, is the narrow, winding defile, wending between cliffs of shale and limestone rock 600 to 1,000 feet high, which runs through the Khyber Range, the northernmost spurs of the Safed Koh Mountains, between Peshawar and Jellalabad. Its highest point is 3,400 feet above the sea on the ridge connecting the Khyber with the Safed Koh Range, and forming the water-shed of two small streams, the one flowing northwest to Jellalabad and the Kabul River, the other south-southeast toward Jamruo, the last British outpost 10½ miles from Peshawar. The pass lies along the beds of these torrents, and, especially in July and August, is subject to sudden floods. The gradient is generally easy, except at the Land Khana Pass, but it is covered with loose stones, which become larger as the head of the stream is reached. To the north of the defile lies the Khyber Range, to the south the Bara Spur of the Safed Koh divides it from the Bara Valley, the river of Peshawar. The mountains which shut it in vary in height from 6,000 to 7,000 feet. Here and there on the vast promontories of rock which run out into the defile rise Buddhist Dagobas, monuments of the time a century after Alexander the Great, when the "great doctrine" of Sakya Muni reigned throughout Northern India. Here and there "written stones" bearing Graeco-Bactrian inscriptions are to be seen in the mountains, while dolmens of unknown origin disposed in rings resembling the stone circles of Stonehenge rise at the entrance of tributary gorges.

One of the best authorities on Irish flowering plants, recently obtained numerous specimens from various parts of Ireland of what was reputed to be the "real shamrock." These were carefully grown to the flowering stage, so as to admit of their being accurately determined. Of 33 plants, 19 proved to be Trifolium repens (white clover), 12 Trifolium minus (a small yellow clover) 2 Trifolium pratense (red clover), and 2 Medicago lupulina (another yellow clover).



GENERAL SIR BLONDIN BLOOD.

General Blood, commander of the British army on the Afghan frontier, is familiar with the character of the hallooed Afghans with whom he has to deal. He took part in the Afghan war of 1879-1880, and was awarded a gold medal for his services.

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